



# Quality Standards for NAFCC Accreditation

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2005**

**Sponsored by  
The National Association for Family Child Care**

**Developed by  
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Wheelock College**

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## ■ INTRODUCTION

### *Background of the Accreditation Project*

In 1994, the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) began a major initiative to develop a new accreditation system for family child care. Instead of modifying existing approaches for assessing quality, NAFCC asked the Family Child Care Project at Wheelock College to lead the development of its new accreditation, beginning "from scratch". NAFCC Accreditation was designed to promote and recognize high quality in family child care.

The Quality Standards for NAFCC Accreditation were developed through a three-year, consensus-building process that included hundreds of providers, parents, resource and referral staff members, and other early childhood experts. Key in the development of the NAFCC accreditation standards were the 53 community across the country. These workgroups held a series of discussions to define quality in family child care and to envision the new accreditation process.

A steering committee of national early childhood leaders were involved in the development of the new system and its relationship to the wider field of professional development in early care and education.

In 1998, the new system was piloted in eight cluster groups in five diverse communities across the country. NAFCC began national implementation of the new accreditation system in 1999.

Today, there are NAFCC accredited providers around the world. Nearly 2,500 providers have become accredited and additional providers enter self-study every day. Because of suggestions from the field, both the process and the standards continue to improve. This is the fourth edition of the Quality Standards for NAFCC Accreditation.

### *What does NAFCC Accreditation do for providers, families, and communities?*

- ◆ DEFINES STANDARDS of quality for the field of family child care
- ◆ HELPS PARENTS AND POLICY-MAKERS recognize high quality family child care
- ◆ PROMOTES PROVIDERS' SELF-ASSESSMENT and professional development
- ◆ MOTIVATES PROVIDERS to put training into practice
- ◆ SERVES AS A CORNERSTONE in state professional development

## ■ HOW TO USE THE PROVIDER'S SELF-STUDY WORKBOOK

The self-study workbook is one of the most important tools a provider has to prepare for accreditation. It will also become a valuable resource once a provider is accredited. Providers should use this workbook during their self-study process.

NAFCC quality standards are all based on sound developmental principles and best practices in the early childhood field. The Self-Study Workbook is organized into five sections: Relationships, The Environment, Developmental Learning Activities, Safety and Health, and Professional and Business Practices. Standards are written on the left of each page. In the space in the middle the provider should circle whether she fully meets, partially meets, or does not meet each standard. In the space on the right the provider should list the steps she needs to take in order to fully meet each standard.

While NAFCC recognizes that many family child care providers are men, the majority of caregivers in the field are women. To simplify language in the self-study workbook, providers will be referred to as she. This is in no way intended to indicate a lack of respect for male family child care providers.

## ■ THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS

### ■ *Eligibility Criteria*

A provider must meet the following eligibility requirements in order to become accredited.

- Be at least 21 years of age.
- Have a High School Diploma or GED.
- Provide care to children for a minimum of 15 hours per week.
- Provide care to a minimum of three children in a home environment. At least one child must live outside the provider's home.
- Be the primary care giver, spending at least 80% of the operating hours actively involved with the children. If applying as co-providers each provider must spend at least 60% of the actively involved with the children.
- Have at least 18 months experience as a family child care provider before the observation visit or 12 months experience if home visits are conducted monthly and intensive training is received.
- Meet the highest level of regulation to operate a family child care program.
- Be in compliance with all regulations of the authorized licensing body.

### ■ *Required Documentation*

Providers and co-providers are required to submit the following documentation:

1. A copy of the highest level of license/registration/certification available for the program.
2. A health assessment within 2 years of when the request for observation visit documentation is complete. The NAFCC Family Child Care Health Assessment form is completed and signed by a health care professional.

3. A TB screening completed and signed by a health care professional using the NAFCC Family Child Care TB Screening Form. An acceptable TB screening must be dated within 2 years of when the request for observation visit documentation is complete and should include one of the following:
  - a) A negative TB test result
  - b) A statement that the provider does not need a TB test for being low risk of acquiring TB
  - c) A statement verifying that the provider has been cleared to work with children in the case that she has had a positive TB test result and/or tuberculosis disease.
4. Current First Aid and Pediatric CPR certificates.
5. A favorable review of state and FBI fingerprint records concerning child abuse and criminal background status for the provider. The review must be dated within 3 years of when the request for observation visit documentation is complete.

If the regulatory agency completes a review of the state records and the FBI fingerprint records concerning child abuse and criminal background status for the provider, a copy of the current family child care license, verified by NAFCC to be in good standing, may be used in lieu of the favorable review records. The records must be completed within the 3 year time frame. If the regulatory agency does not complete one or more of these reviews, the provider must obtain the review not completed by the state regulatory agency.
6. Documentation of at least 90 clock hours of FCC related training and education or a current Child Development Associate (CDA) Family Child Care Credential awarded through the Council for Professional Recognition. Providers are encouraged to seek training in each of the content areas. A minimum of 15 hours is required in each of at least three of the five content areas. The content areas are Parts 1 - 5 of the Quality Standards. NAFCC will accept the distribution of training in any of the following categories:
  - Workshops of two hours or less - *up to 28 hours*
  - Comprehensive training through an accreditation project, resource and referral agency, association, or network - *up to 58 hours*
  - A provider who teaches classes or workshops may include up to 18 contact hours of training (one time per training topic).
  - Coursework from an accredited college or university (including CDA and distance learning)
  - Continuing education units (CEU) from an accredited college or university

The training hours must be completed within 3 years prior to the date the request for observation visit documentation is complete. Training certificates or other verification of attendance must be attached to the NAFCC Training Record Form. The certificates or verification of training must include the name of the provider, the topic and date of the training, the number of hours attended, and if possible, the signature or stamp of the instructor or institution.

**Items number 2, 3, and 4 listed above are required for all assistants.**

**The NAFCC Accreditation Process is divided into four main phases. The Application Phase, the Self-study Phase, the Observation Phase, and the Decision Phase.**

### ■ ***Application Phase***

During the application phase, the provider completes the Application Packet and submits the packet and applicable fees to NAFCC.

### ■ ***Self-study Phase***

Once a provider has completed the Application Phase she receives the Self-Study Packet and is considered a candidate for accreditation. A candidate must spend a minimum of two months in self-study. She is allowed up to two years to complete the self-study phase and request the observation visit.

A candidate is encouraged to join training and support groups or to request assistance from a mentor/advisor during the self-study process. A candidate may also find the following list helpful during self-study:

- Review the standards in this workbook to reflect upon and evaluate the quality of the family child care program.
- Identify areas where improvement is needed to meet the quality standards.
- Design a Professional Development Plan to prepare for accreditation.
- Make quality improvements.

As the candidate nears the end of self-study she should begin to prepare the documentation required for the next phase. Gathering the necessary documentation often takes a significant amount of time.

### ■ ***Observation Phase***

#### *Documentation*

To initiate the observation phase, the candidate must submit a complete request for observation visit to NAFCC. This includes the *Request for Observation Visit* form (enclosed in the self-study packet) and all of the required documentation. See the “Required Documentation” section above for a detailed list of the documents. NAFCC accepts only a complete request for observation visit. Incomplete requests will be returned to the candidate. The request can be re-submitted when all required documents are current and complete.

#### *Observer Assignment*

Once NAFCC has verified that the request for observation is complete an observer will be assigned within 8 weeks.

### Provider Self-Observation/self-certification

NAFCC will send the Self-Observation Packet to the candidate. The packet includes the self-observation book, parent surveys and other forms. The candidate should complete the self-observation book before the observer visit. This offers the candidate an opportunity to take one more look at the program. It will also help the candidate be aware of the things the observer will be looking for during the observation.

At least 80% of the families enrolled in the program must return a parent survey to the provider in a sealed envelope. The provider signs the Self-certified affidavit and returns all of the materials to NAFCC within 48 hours after the observation visit has taken place.

### Observation Visit

NAFCC sends the Observer Packet to the assigned observer. Within 48 hours of receiving the packet, the observer should contact the provider to schedule the observation visit. Observations should be planned for a typical day and should be scheduled within 30 days of receiving the packet.

The actual observation must last at least 4 hours. After the observation the observer should take about an hour break away from the program in order to prepare for the interview with the provider. The provider should have someone available to the children during the interview, which should last approximately 1 hour.

Observer Scoring – The observer will mark standards that do not apply to the program as not applicable (N/A). For example, if there are no babies in care, all standards regarding babies will be scored N/A. There may be standards that apply, but are not seen during the observer's visit. These will be scored Not Observed (N/O). Observers are not expected to see all of the standards during a four hour observation.

During the interview, the observer should ask about any standard scored less than fully met or not observed. Sometimes candidates have a good reason for not meeting one of the non-starred standards; in these cases, they may choose to take an "Intentional No". When a candidate chooses to take an intentional no, she must give an explanation and any information NAFCC will need in order to make a decision about the standard.

Once the observation visit is concluded, the observer submits the completed materials to NAFCC within 48 hours.

### ■ **Decision Phase**

Within 8-12 weeks of receiving both the candidate's and the observer's materials, NAFCC will notify the candidate by mail of the accreditation decision.

The NAFCC Accreditation Commission is responsible for accreditation decisions. Commissioners have Masters Degrees in early childhood education or a closely related field. They are well acquainted with the diversity of family child care homes, and have expertise in particular areas such as special needs, language/cultural subgroups, etc.



The observer's documentation, the candidate's self-certified standards, and the parent surveys are all used to gather data about how the candidate's program meets the standards. Each of these items is reviewed by accreditation staff and compiled for a complete picture of the family child care program. Accreditation policies require that each candidate fully meets all mandatory or "starred" standards. In addition, accreditation policies require that candidates successfully demonstrate that they meet a specified percentage of all non-starred items in each category. When a candidate meets the above criteria, accreditation is awarded for a period of three years.

Occasionally, there is an issue that prevents a candidate from receiving full accreditation status. In this case, the candidate receives a conditional accreditation with the opportunity to send, within a specified timeframe, proof that the issue has been resolved.

A candidate will be deferred if the Accreditation Commission concludes that significant improvements must be made in the child care program and additional time is needed in the self-study process. The provider may apply for accreditation when ready, but no sooner than 12 months.

Candidates have the option to appeal any decision made by the Accreditation Commission. Appeals must be made in writing, addressed to the Commission and mailed to NAFCC with any additional documentation.

If the provider moves during the three-year accreditation period, she must contact NAFCC for a New Home Certification Packet. The provider must complete the packet certifying that her family child care program, at the new location, meets the accreditation standards.

### ■ ***Re-accreditation***

A re-accreditation packet will be mailed to an accredited provider 9 months before her accreditation expires.

Providers seeking re-accreditation are encouraged to complete the process in a timely manner so there is no gap in accreditation and a consistent, easy to anticipate, re-accreditation date is maintained. To facilitate this practice, the three year re-accreditation period will begin on the previous expiration date if the decision is made within 45 days prior to or after the original expiration date.

Although the two-month self-study requirement is waived, NAFCC strongly encourages providers who are becoming re-accredited to allow ample time for thoughtful review of the standards and necessary program changes.

### ■ ***Denial or Withdrawal of Accreditation***

Denial or withdrawal of accreditation may occur for the following reasons as it pertains to NAFCC Accreditation:

- ***Criminal Conviction,***
- ***Committing fraud or providing incorrect information,***
- ***Altering of records or documents.***